



# Human Rights & Marginalized Groups in Southeast Asia

## Course Details

**Course Designator & Number: THAI 4006**

**Number of Credits: 4**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**Contact Hours: 60**

**Instructor: On-Site Faculty**

## Course Description

This course will focus on human rights broadly defined, including social work as well as other efforts to educate and work with vulnerable populations. The course will look at the roles of local people, nonprofits, government agencies, and intergovernmental entities in determining how to best work with and serve vulnerable populations and how these different stakeholders collaborate while addressing complex, often sensitive situations. Course content will focus on citizenship and orphan/vulnerable children, as well as human trafficking, disabilities, migrant workers, and other issues in the Thai context, as well as minority issues, especially with the hill tribes of Northern Thailand.

This course encourages students to think critically about theories and practices. For the majority of examples and reading, the course will draw on case studies from Thailand and links to global issues. We will explore “progress” as a contested value and process on multiple scales—local, national, and global. Special emphasis will be placed on the practice: What does it mean to engage in this work in a cross-cultural setting? We will examine the roles of outsiders and facilitators and how local communities and organizations can be empowered through this process.

## Course Objectives

- Provide an overview of the major issues in human rights with a special emphasis on

marginalized communities in the Global South

- Examine the cultural, historical, and legal framework of human rights in both theory and practice in Thailand and Southeast Asia
- Understand the specific historical and cultural context and understanding of human rights and marginalization in the Thai context
- Provide an overview of theories, practices, and current trends
- Utilize theoretical and conceptual tools to critically analyze specific problems, policy programs, and projects as they experience them in their host communities and internship agencies
- Promote multidisciplinary ways of thinking that can be used to synthesize and analyze local, national, and global issues surrounding human rights and marginalized groups
- Identify the needs of specific social groups, power relationships among relevant social groups, and methods or strategies applied by each group to access social services, then develop recommendations for delivering social services

## Methodology

The course will integrate course lectures and readings with group discussions and seminars. Experiential field studies will be an important component of the course, both formal and informal. Guest lecturers will be a part of the course to share their experiences and perspective with students. Keeping up with readings, materials presented in class, and assignments is critical for success during this course.

## Experiential Learning & Field Visits

This course emphasizes hands-on learning through field visits, site observations, and engagement with human rights organizations, Indigenous communities in Chiang Mai, and human rights activists. Students will have opportunities to interact with practitioners, explore real-world applications of course concepts, and critically reflect on their experiences. Through these field studies, students will be able to examine the roles of outsiders and facilitators and how local communities and organizations can be empowered through this process.

## Required Reading / Materials

### Unit 1

- McMichael, Philip, *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective*, Sage, 2017 chapter 1
- Mullen, M., & Hayes, M. (2017). In *An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast*

Asia. Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA). Vol 2.

### Unit 2

- Rodloytuk, Palphol (2021) "Engaged Buddhist Community as a Human Right Response: A Case of Buddhist Participatory Communication," Asian Review: Vol. 34: No. 2, Article 3.

### Unit 3

- Morton, Micah F. (2016). "The Indigenous Peoples' Movement in Thailand Expands." Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Perspective 68:1-12

### Units 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15

- Hayes, M. M. (2016). In An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia . Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA).

### Unit 7

- United Nations. (2007, September). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf). Accessed 17 September 2023.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1975, December 9). Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-disabled-persons>. Accessed 17 September 2023.

### Unit 13

- Proyer, M. (2013). Thailand's move from a pity to a rights-based understanding of disability. In Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on International Relations and Development (ICIRD 2013): Beyond the Borders: Building a Regional Commons. Chulalongkorn University.

### Unit 14

- Raising our voices to save our future!, based on community-led participatory research, to present an investigation into the human rights situation of Indigenous women in Thailand. (2019) Available at: <https://www.manushyafoundation.org/iwnt-report> (Accessed: February 15, 2023).

## Unit 16

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Thailand: UNHCR Thailand Fact Sheet, 31 December 2023
- Access Now, Article 19, ASEAN Regional Coalition to #StopDigitalDictatorship & Manushya Foundation. (2021, April 5). ARTICLE 19 - Defending freedom of expression and information
- <https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Joint-UPR-Submission-Digital-Rights-in-Thailand..pdf>

# Grading

## Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

## Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation in class	15%
Seminar and general observation notes	5%
Field study notes	20%
Essays	20%
Independent field study proposal	10%
Independent field study progress update	10%
Final presentation	20%
<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Assessment Details

### Participation

**In-Class Participation:** This means being an active participant in classes, contributing meaningfully to the discussions, questions, and ongoing learning.

**Field Studies:** Participating in field studies outside of the classroom, both through asking good questions in the field, engaging in activities, and being an active and engaged learner during field studies.

### Seminar & General Observation Notes

An important component of learning to observe and analyze the issues during this course is taking notes in class as well as keeping an on-going record of observations about Thailand.

This means writing daily in your field notebook, even if only for brief or significant observations.

## Field Study Notes

A more structured way of taking notes and learning during a field study. Field Study Notes need to be structured as follows for each Field Study:

- “Field Study Notes” and the title / study and the date on the TOP of the page.
- “Where” — describe the location of the field study. If multiple locations note that as well.
- “When” — both the date as well as the time of day/duration.
- “Description” — describe the activities and learning during the field study. This should be detailed and clear about what the activities were.
- “Analysis” — write out what you learned during the Field Study. How did the field study help you understand Thailand’s culture and history, or other topics?
- “Questions” — write three (3) questions that you would like to learn more about based on this Field Study.

## Essays

For this course, essays are longer reflections and analysis. There are two (2) essays during the course, due on Monday of the third week and the last day of the course. Choose a topic that you studied during those weeks that you’re interested in and take some time to reflect on what you’ve learned. Essays should be 2 pages long when typed in a doc format using Font: Times New Roman, Size: 12 point, Spacing: Double and covering the following points (10 points total):

- How this issue or topic links to the overall topic of the course. (1)
- Why you are interested in this specific issue or topic. (1)
- An analysis of a specific issue observed or learned about during the two weeks — describe this and why it is important. (5)
- Reference to interviews or observations during the course. (2)
- Other questions that this issue raises for you to explore further. (1)

## Independent Field Research Project

Each student will choose an issue related to the course to study independently. This should be a combination of research, observations, and analysis of a topic that the student is interested in. The emphasis is primarily on field observations broadly defined, drawing on both class related field studies as well as independent observations in Thailand on your own time.

**Proposal:** The IFRP proposal will be a 1-page long when typed in a doc format using Font: Times New Roman, Size: 12 point, Spacing: Double explaining what you are interested in studying, personal rationale, how data will be gathered, the feasibility of studying this during the course, and any potential challenges you may anticipate running into.

**Progress Update:** This part of the IFRP is a short update during the course delivered both oral and a doc format (1 page long when typed in a doc format using Font: Times New Roman, Size: 12 point, Spacing: Double) on what the student has discovered about their topic so far, what further questions this raises, any challenges they have faced and how they have overcome them, as well as further information they will be looking for during the second half of the field study.

### **Final Presentation**

On the last day of the course each student will give a five minute presentation on their research. Focus on clarity, field observations, interviews/discussions with community members, and analytical depth. 5-10 slides in PDF format.

# Course Content

## Unit 1

### Introduction to Human Rights in the Global South

This unit introduces students to human rights frameworks, emphasizing their evolution in Southeast Asia and the Global South. Through readings on development and social change, students will explore how human rights are understood, contested, and implemented in different contexts. The unit sets the foundation for analyzing human rights beyond Western-centric perspectives, highlighting local and global struggles for justice.

Readings:

- McMichael, Philip, *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective*, Sage, 2017 chapter 1
- Mullen, M., & Hayes, M. (2017). Chapter Eight: Human Rights in Southeast Asian Histories. In *An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia* (Vol. 2, pp. 01 – 29). *Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA)*

## Unit 2

### Human Rights & Engaged Buddhism Field Study to Bodhiyalaya Foundation

This unit explores Engaged Buddhism as a framework for social activism and human rights advocacy. Students will visit the Bodhiyalaya Foundation, engaging with Buddhist practitioners who work with vulnerable communities. Readings will provide insight into how Buddhist participatory communication serves as a human rights response, particularly in Thailand.

Readings:

- Rodloytuk, Palphol (2021) "Engaged Buddhist Community as a Human Right Response: A Case of Buddhist Participatory Communication," *Asian Review*: Vol. 34: No. 2, Article 3.

## Unit 3

## **The Indigenous Peoples' Movement in Thailand**

Focusing on the Indigenous Peoples' Movement, this unit examines the rights and struggles of hill tribes and ethnic minorities in Thailand. Students will analyze how Indigenous communities organize, advocate for legal recognition, and navigate state policies that shape their citizenship, land rights, and cultural preservation.

Readings:

- Morton, Micah F. (2016). 'The Indigenous Peoples' Movement in Thailand Expands'. *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Perspective* 68:1-12

## **Unit 4**

### **Field Study to The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) Organization**

AIPP is a regional network advocating for Indigenous rights across Asia. This field study will expose students to grassroots advocacy, indigenous governance structures, and human rights campaigns. Through interactions with AIPP representatives, students will gain insight into policy efforts, legal battles, and community-driven solutions to Indigenous rights challenges.

About AIPP

AIPP is a regional organization founded in 1992 by Indigenous peoples' movements. AIPP is committed to promoting and defending Indigenous peoples' rights and human rights and articulating issues of relevance to Indigenous peoples. At present, AIPP has 46 members from 14 countries in Asia with 18 Indigenous peoples' national alliances/networks (national formations), 30 local and sub-national organizations. Of this number, 16 are ethnic based organizations, six (6) Indigenous women and four (4) are Indigenous youth organizations and one (1) organization of Indigenous persons with disabilities.

## **Unit 5**

### **An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia & International Treaties**

This unit introduces international human rights frameworks, focusing on their application in Southeast Asia. Students will analyze how ASEAN, international treaties, and human rights organizations interact with local and national policies. Topics include state sovereignty, compliance with international norms, and enforcement mechanisms.

Readings:

- Hayes, M. M. (2016). Chapter One: The Fundamentals of Human Rights. In *An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia* (1st ed., Vol. 1, Ser. 1, pp. 1–28).

Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA).

Independent Field Research Project Proposal Presentations:

- Present your proposed focused inquiry, and discuss both challenges and opportunities in gathering data in the field.
- Explanation of Field Research Notebooks
- Introduction to Field Expedition (Field Instructors)

Assignments:

- IFRP proposal due

## Unit 6

### Lecture & Field Study to the Life Skills Development Foundation

This field study will explore the Life Skills Development Foundation, an organization focused on children's rights and community empowerment. Students will engage with practitioners to understand how human rights organizations operate, address legal challenges, and implement grassroots development initiatives.

Readings:

- Hayes, M. M. (2016). Chapter Three: International Human Rights Treaties. In An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia (1st ed., Vol. 1, Ser. 1, pp. 49 – 72). Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA)
- Mullen, M., & Hayes, M. (2017). Chapter Twelve: Human Rights and Development. In An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia (Vol. 2, pp. 130 – 157). Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA)

## Unit 7

### Women's Rights

This unit examines women's rights in Southeast Asia, with a focus on Indigenous and marginalized women. Through a guest lecture from Mrinalini Rai, students will explore gender-based discrimination, policy efforts, and how women are leading environmental and social movements. Readings will highlight global frameworks like CEDAW and gender-focused

initiatives in biodiversity and human rights.

Guest speaker: Mrinalini Rai, Director

As Women4Biodiversity director, Mrinalini draws from her experience as an international expert on biodiversity and gender, having worked several years in advocating for the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities and women and youth in various local to global dialogues. She strongly believes in the ground-level up movement and the strength of communities' experiences and voices. She supports and advocates for the full, effective and meaningful participation of women and believes they are not only the key rights holders but that they are also a key for a transformative and just society.

An Indigenous woman herself, Mrinalini worked extensively with Indigenous peoples before she focused on gender, which she sees inextricably linked with the Indigenous experience and as an issue that cuts across sectors. She served as an Indigenous advisor and gender expert for different organizations. She holds an MA in Sustainable Development from Chiang Mai University

Readings:

- United Nations. (2007, September). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf). Accessed 17 September 2023.
- Recommended online read: Advancing Women's Rights, Gender Equality and the Future of Biodiversity in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework <https://www.women4biodiversity.org/advancing-womens-rights-gender-equality-and-the-future-of-biodiversity/>

## Unit 8

### Lecture / Workshop: Children's Rights

This unit will provide a deep dive into children's rights, addressing issues such as education, child labor, and exploitation. A workshop will allow students to explore how legal and cultural frameworks shape child protection policies and advocacy efforts in Thailand and the broader Southeast Asian region.

Readings:

- Mullen, M., & Hayes, M. (2017). Chapter Ten: Children's Human Rights. In An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia (Vol. 2, pp. 58–99). Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA)

## Unit 9

### Guest Speaker: Human Trafficking

A guest expert will provide insight into human trafficking networks, policies, and interventions in Thailand. Students will analyze trafficking within the context of migration, labor exploitation, and international human rights efforts, using reports from the ILO and regional organizations.

- Triangle in ASEAN quarterly briefing note: Thailand. (2024, September 20). International Labour Organization <https://www.ilo.org/resource/report/triangle-asean-quarterly-briefing-note-thailand>

## Unit 10

### Field study: Chiang Khong & Stay Overnight

This field study will explore border issues, migration, and human trafficking in Chiang Khong. Students will meet with local organizations working to protect migrants and vulnerable populations along the Thai-Lao border, gaining firsthand exposure to human rights challenges in cross-border contexts.

Assignments:

- Essay #1 due
- IRP Progress Update Due

## Unit 11

### Guest Speaker: Land Rights & Media

This unit will explore the role of land rights in Indigenous struggles, examining case studies from IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs). Students will also analyze the role of media in shaping narratives about marginalized groups, considering ethical journalism and advocacy in human rights reporting.

The Indigenous World 2024 - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.  
IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs  
<https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/publications/5508-the-indigenous-world-2024.html>  
United Nations

## Unit 12

### Land Rights & Indigenous Peoples

#### Field study: Op Khan National Park, Chiang Mai

Through this field study, students will examine land rights conflicts, conservation policies, and Indigenous displacement. The visit to Op Khan National Park will provide insights into the intersection of environmental protection, Indigenous land tenure, and government policies.

## Unit 13

### Guest Speaker / Workshop: Disability Inclusive Culture

This unit will explore disability rights and inclusivity in Southeast Asia, analyzing how disability is framed in policy, culture, and activism. Students will engage in a workshop on barriers to accessibility, inclusion in education, and employment rights for people with disabilities.

Readings:

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1975, December 9). Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-disabled-persons>. Accessed 17 September 2023.
- Proyer, M. (2013). Thailand's move from a pity to a rights-based understanding of disability. In Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on International Relations and Development (ICIRD 2013): Beyond the Borders: Building a Regional Commons. Chulalongkorn University.

## Unit 14

### Field study: Huai E Khang, Chiang Mai & Stay Overnight

Students will visit Huai E Khang, an Indigenous village where they will engage with women's empowerment programs, traditional livelihoods, and land rights advocacy. The visit will offer insight into community-led initiatives for preserving culture and addressing human rights concerns.

Readings:

- Raising our voices to save our future<sup>1</sup>, based on community-led participatory research, to present an investigation into the human rights situation of Indigenous women in Thailand. (2019) Available at:

<https://www.manushyafoundation.org/iwnt-report> (Accessed: February 15, 2023).

## Unit 15

### Women's Rights & Gender Diversity

This unit builds on previous discussions of women's rights, focusing on gender diversity, LGBTQ+ rights, and intersectional feminism. Students will analyze legal protections, cultural attitudes, and advocacy movements within Thailand and the broader Southeast Asian region.

Readings:

- Mullen , M., & Hayes, M. (M. (2017). Chapter Nine: Women's Human Rights. In An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia (Vol. 2, pp. 31 – 56). Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA)

## Unit 16

### Human Rights & The Rights of Non-Citizens

This unit examines the rights of refugees, stateless persons, and migrants, focusing on Thailand's legal framework and international refugee protections. Students will analyze case studies of migrant workers, asylum seekers, and human rights violations, considering ASEAN's role in regional migration policy.

Readings:

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Thailand: UNHCR Thailand Fact Sheet, 31 December 2023
- Mullen , M., & Hayes, M. (M. (2016). Chapter Six: The Rights of Non-Citizens: Refugees and the Stateless. In An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia (Vol. 1, pp. 129–159). Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA)

## Unit 17

### Political Rights, Democracy, & the Media in Southeast Asia

This unit will explore political rights, digital activism, and press freedom in the region. Students will examine how governments in Southeast Asia regulate speech, the internet, and democratic participation, using case studies from Thailand, Myanmar, and the Philippines.

Readings will focus on media censorship, online surveillance, and political resistance.

Readings:

- Access Now, Article 19, ASEAN Regional Coalition to #StopDigitalDictatorship & Manushya Foundation. (2021, April 5). ARTICLE 19 - Defending freedom of expression and information
- <https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Joint-UPR-Submission-Digital-Rights-in-Thailand..pdf>

## Unit 18

### Final Wrap-up

The course will conclude with final presentations, where students will share their Independent Research Projects (IRP). Students will also submit their final essays and field study notes reflecting on their experiences engaging with human rights organizations, activists, and marginalized communities throughout the semester.

- Final Presentations
- Essay #2 Due
- Field Study Notes Due

# Policies

## Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

## Extensions Policy

Students may request an extension for an assignment. The request must be communicated by email to the lead instructor and MSID coordinator, more than 1 day before the assignment is due. Extension requests on the due date, without a legitimate reason, will not be considered for review.

## Late Submission Policy

A submission is labeled late when it has been submitted past the due date established in the course syllabus. This policy affects all the assignments in the course. For each day late - 5% of the assignment's grade. In addition, for 1 to 3 days late, the student will receive less feedback and comments than submissions that were on time. For 4+ days late, the student will not receive comments or feedback.

## University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

### Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty

up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

### **Student Conduct**

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).